DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 316 483 SO 020 660

AUTHOR Binder, Daniel A.
TITLE Music: A Frequently Missing Component in American Studies.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at Joint Meeting of the American Studies Association and the Canadian Association for American Studies (Toronto, Canada, November 2-5, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Studies; College Curriculum; College Instruction; Cultural Influences; *Curriculum Enrichment; Higher Education; *Modernism; *Music; Musical Composition; *Music Education; Music Teachers; Music Theory; Postsecondary Education; Social Influences
IDENTIFIERS *Musicology

ABSTRACT

The American Studies curriculum in institutions of higher education has traditionally neglected music. Many programs do not include music as a component, and often there is not a single course on U.S. music taught in the music department. The apparent lack of interest on the part of musicologists reflects an attitude that tends to denigrate the study of music as part of American Studies. The discipline of musicology in the United States has often ignored or trivialized the significance of U.S. music. Since early U.S. history, people have imitated European cultural models, and concert and popular music has been viewed negatively. The music curriculum in U.S. higher education continues to stress European, white, male composers. Modernism in musicology emphasizes elitist attitudes so that black music, women's music, and world music are limited or excluded from undergraduate courses. Texts generally ignore composers, and elitism and esotericism are favored by publishers of articles and books. Today, publications containing music topics are increasing. Greater inclusion of U.S. music in higher education must occur and a music component should be encouraged in American Studies programs. (AS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED316483

Music: A Frequently Missing Component in American Studies

Presented To

American Studies Association
Canadian Association For American Studies
International Convention
"Americas '89: Five Centuries of Endings and Beginnings"
Toronto Sheraton
November 2-5, 1989

by

Daniel A. Binder, D.A.
Professor of Music
Lewis University
Romeoville, Illinois 60441
USA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

DANIEL A. BINDER

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO 020 660

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

MUSIC: A FREQUENTLY MISSING COMPONENT IN AMERICAN STUDIES

All too frequently music is overlooked in American studies. A case in point is this very international convention. During the course of the next three days some three hundred and sixty-two papers will be presented. Only nine of those papers will deal with music in some fashion, about 2.4% Of some one hundred and eleven paper sessions only one is devoted to music exclusively for a percentage of .9. Let us continue on a bit further in our examination of statistics relative to music in American studies during this conference. Of the nine papers dealing with music, two (which are being presented during this session) deal with music relative to American studies as a field of study, two examine music as a part of high culture, while the remaining five stress the role of music in popular culture.

You may wish to reflect on the situation in your own home institutions. Is there a music component in your American studies program ? Is there even an American music course offered by the music department? If there is a course on some aspect of American music, who teaches it? Often it is not someone from the area of historical musicology, but rather from one of the other specialties of music or someone from outside of the discipline of music altogether. Now, I am not suggesting that American music can only be taught by a person with a musicology background, but I am suggesting that this apparent lack of interest on the part of musicologists reflects an attitude that tends to denigrate the study of American music. The discipline of musicology in the United States has tended to ignore or even worse, trivialize the very subject of American music, either of the art or popular variety.

There are, at least, two major reasons for the development of this attitude. One such reason reaches far back in U.S. history to the early decades of the Republic. In spite of our early difficulties with Great Britain, we soon came to imitate English and European cultural models, feeling perhaps that our own musical achievements were poor in comparison with societies that had been in existence for hundreds of years. This situation was further exacerbated by the growing numbers of immigrants from Italy and Germany during the nineteenth century. This led to the occurrence of the widespread popularity of Italian opera performed both in Italian and in English translation, and German lieder by composers such as Franz Schubert, Franz Abt and Robert Franz, also both published and performed in German and in English[1] In addition, Lowell Mason, often referred to as the "father" of American music education, introduced his students to "good" music which was based upon simplified versions of German Romantic music, simplified because he believed Americans were not yet ready for the "real" thing. Throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the principal arbiter of "good" musical taste in America was Boston's Transcendentalist music critic, John Sullivan Dwight. Dwight's *Journal of Music* carried on the battle between good (European) versus bad (American concert and popular) music.

Soon after being organized, most American symphonies and opera companies regularly employed mostly European musicians, singers, and conductors. Their repertoire was, not surprisingly, European, mostly of the German Romantic tradition, except for opera which remained primarily devoted to the Italian variety (and now almost always performed in the original language). The growing split between high and popular culture became a chasm in Victorian America.

When music was introduced in the curriculum of American universities and colleges during the final decades of the nineteenth century, the initial chairs of music were almost invariably filled by European trained American composers such as John Knowles Paine at Harvard, Horatio Parker at Yale, George Chadwick at the New England Conservatory and Edward MacDowell at Columbia University. Europeans were also appointed, such as Antoine Dvorak as the director of the newly established National Conservatory in New York City. It is interesting to note that while the music of people like Paine, Parker, Chadwick, and MacDowell enjoyed frequent performances of their music while alive, once they had passed from the scene do did their music, which then was often criticized for being so derivative. This fact is rather forcefully underscored by Peter Eliot Stone, who, in liner notes for a new recording of J John Knowles Paine's *Mass in D* , recently wrote,

> "We Americans seem to set up more stringent and less rational criteria for our own music than for European music. We tend to speak of one European composer as being influenced by another but of his American counterpart as being **derivative** (emphasis added) of an European model. Similarly, although not all European composers are comparable to Bach and Beethoven, we nevertheless enjoy them for what they have to offer; but we seem not to be willing to lend the same sympathetic ear to good American composers.The works of Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, George Whitefield Chadwick, Arthur Foote, Charles Tomlinson Griffes, John Knowles Paine, or Horatio Parker, for example, rank with many contemporaneous European works in the repertory; but our prejudices prevent our listening to them openly,, and **ignorance** (emphasis added) of our tradition feeds those prejudices.[2]

With the coming of World War I, the German influence in American music, as in many other areas, came to an abrupt halt. For a period of time, the French enjoyed great influence upon American music and composers. American students flocked to Paris to study with perhaps the most famous composition teacher of all time, Nadia Boulanger. These students, returning to the United States during the Great Depression, established the first truly "Americanist" school of music, due in no small part to the assistance of the Federal Music Project of the WPA. Unfortunately, the approach of World War II hastened the end of these programs before American music could achieve a permanent place in the concert halls and opera houses of the United States.

A second major reason causing the neglect of American music came with a flood of German composers and musicologists to the U.S. who were escaping the rise of Fascism during the nineteen-thirties They quickly re-established the German influence in American music and musical scholarship. Their influence, along with the organizing in 1934 of the American

Musicological Society , led to the establishing of very rigorous standards emphasizing a strongly Euro-centric perspective. American composers of concert music were once again denigrated or completely ignored. Folk music and popular music such as jazz were, for the most part, considered as "lowbrow" music to be payed as little attention to as possible. However, a number of European composers were openly embracing the jazz influences in their music, and there were some musicologists like Oscar Sonneck, the first head music librarian at the Library of Congress, and Charles Seeger who were initiating some of the first important researches into various aspects of American music and more importantly, encouraging others to follow in their footsteps.

The effects of Modernism are also not to be ignored. The German and other European composers who fled to the U.S. often subscribed to the complex rhythms and harsh dissonances of musical modernism, particularly of the dodecaphonic type. At the same time the cerebral music of the avant-garde twentieth-century composers was being rejected more and more by the increasingly tradition bound concert halls and opera houses which were becoming temples to the great European, white, male composers of the past and their masterpieces. These museums to the European musical past became economically stable by performing a very restricted repertoire of perhaps no more than fifteen to twenty composers and their works. While that repertoire has grown in recent years, it generally has not been with American works. For example, the Chicago music critics have for years complained about the Chicago Symphony's ignoring American music. Then in the spring of 1988, the Chicago papers heralded the fact that a fourth of the 1988-89 Chicago Symphony season would be made up of American compositions. Did this signal a new trend? Absolutely not! One has to look long and hard to find American music on the 1989-90 season's schedule. Additionally, with the appointment of Daniel Barenboim as the successor to Sir George Solti, the outlook for American or modern works is not very bright, as Barenboim is seemingly completely devoted to the canon of European masterpieces. Nor the development of modern recording technology following World War II done anything but reinforce this attitude. Not long ago, I made a cursory examination of the Schwann Catalog of recordings and discovered that fully eleven pages were devoted to the recordings of Beethoven. Therein were listed fifty-three different recordings of his *Fifth Symphony* .

Now let us look at music in American higher education. Musical scholarship continues to be devoted to a canon of masterpieces by European, white, male composers. It is common for someone to go through a bachelor's masters' and doctoral program in music and never take one course in American music. If courses are available, as electives, they are frequently not offered by a faculty member of the musicology establishment and because they are not, are thus not considered very important from a scholarly point of view. Not many English departments would think of allowing a major to graduate without some study of American literature. Indeed, in the university in which I teach even English <u>minors</u> are required to take <u>two</u> semesters of American literature. Likewise, no history major could graduate without one or more courses in American history. All students planning to teach in the public schools must take a course in American history. In fact all students at Lewis University must take a sociology course entitled, "Cultural Diversity in America.

Richard Crawford, a musicologist, past president of the American Musicological Society and a devoted scholar of American music, offers these interesting insights into the differences between the study of European and American music. He says,

> "The present-day scholar of European music, by courtesy of tradition, begins with a value-system [aesthetic and otherwise], an archive of precious and not-so-precious objects (many ready to use) bibliographical and biographical maps which distinguish well-worn paths, underdeveloped terrain, and terra incognita. By contrast, the scholar of American music has no established value-system (even his monuments sometimes speak in riddles). His archive is a kind of junkheap-the gems are buried in a rubble of sheet-music, newspaper clippings, song collections, manuscripts by unknowns-and the best maps are of the other side of the tracks....What the scholar of American music is left with, then, is a huge mass of music and information-mostly unassimilated, a few excellent tools for handling it, and a belief which he hopes is not an illusion."[3]

Crawford goes on to say,

> "The scholar of American music is not indifferent to value. But he learns that there are values other than aesthetic value, and he also learns the hazards of judging value quickly-especially when the genre is modest or the style unusual."[4]

Within the discipline of historical musicology there is a distinction to be made between musicology and music history as explained by Robert Copeland, who writes,

> "Most musicologists when 'doing' musicology do not write music history; instead they write monographs, journal articles, and other research reports quite limited in scope (e.g. style analysis, bibliography), usually with little or no attempt to place their subject in any but the most restricted perspective....Like the musicologists, the music historian is concerned with musical events but the historian is also concerned with genuinely historical events. Such historical events are imbedded in the time-frame (calendar time), and cannot be explained by purely musical (technical) means. The music historian, as distinct from the musicologist, must have constant reference to history and her handmaidens (e.g. sociology, anthropology,semeiotics)."[5]

One of the effects of the increasing manifestations of modernism is that most frequently the emphasis is put upon musicology rather than music history. Modernist musicology emphasizes, among other things, an ever increasingly narrow perspective that assumes an elitist attitude. This brand of musicology stresses very esoteric subjects which have only self-referentiality. For examples of this, one has only to glance through the titles of doctoral dissertations and recent issues of most of the prestigious musicological journals. What is found

is the isolation of scholars working in smaller and smaller discrete areas of their disciplines. As one scholar has said, in an only slightly exaggerated statement, "They have been learning more and more about less and less until they know everything about nothing."[6]

These manifestations of modernism in musicology result in a whole set of attitudes towards a now sacred canon of Western masterpieces of high art, which affects teaching general survey courses for the undergraduate and which results in the limitation or exclusion of the very idea of American music, black music, women's music, or world music. For example, we might examine the texts written for use in the general survey history of Western music. "The history of music is primarily the history of style," claims one of the co-authors of one of the most widely used general histories of Western Music.[7] In this particular text and in many others who also follow the same premise, what follows is a tracing of the traditional style periods from which emerge a few genius illuminaries and their masterpieces. Generally each work is treated to a complex critical analysis. What is lacking is any sort of contextual setting. Visibly absent also are those composers that are not European, white, and male. Only a couple of exceptions are made for American composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Twentieth-century music deals primarily with composers who exhibit modernist avant-garde characteristics and all are from prior to World War II. This is accomplished in just one chapter out of a total of twenty. Texts written for genre or period studies of music are little better.

Textbooks written for use in introductory music courses for non-majors now usually exhibit the requisite chapter(s) on American music, world music or popular music, but they are included as a final chapter in the book where such material can be safely ignored if time runs short in the academic term. An even more restricted canon of masterpieces is presented which is analyzed in highly technical terms, often with pages of musical notation included - all of this intended for students who presumably have no skills in reading musical notation. On the positive side, most introductory music text do include reproductions of art work of the period under discussion. Rarely, however, is there any meaningful discussion comparing and contrasting the art works and the music. Presumably, synthesis is supposed to happen automatically.

On an institutional level, little if anything is done to counter the effects of the isolation and relativism of modernist scholarship. For instance, in matters of promotion and tenure, the more esoteric articles and books published the better, especially if published by the most elite of journals and publishers. Elitism and esotericism are frequently mistaken for rigorous scholarship. In fact, being heralded as an excellent teacher or doing scholarly work in the "fringe" areas of women's music, black music, or even American music can often be detrimental to the career of a young untenured scholar.

Yearly, the list grows of completed doctoral dissertations and masters thesises on American musical topics. There are now three fine journals on American and black music being published on a regular basis. The available books, anthologies and recordings on women's music, black music, and American music is rapidly increasing. Indeed, just this year, two new general music history textbooks have been published which attempt to integrate into the

Western musical mainstream the accomplishments of women, blacks, and Americans. Finally, in addition to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* , there has been published a four volume *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* containing over five thousand articles on every conceivable aspect of music in America.

The Sonneck Society for American Music, an organization of close to a thousand members, is devoted to the study of all aspects of American music. It holds annual meetings, publishes a newsletter and sponsors the journal, *American Music* , a quarterly publication. The 1990 meeting of the Sonneck Society will be held during the month of April in Toronto, Canada.

Our colleagues in music education have for a long time already been exploring the repertories of American music and world musics as all available curriculum materials clearly show. The irony is that the music educators using these materials very likely received no introduction to these musics while students, at least from the music history departments of their undergraduate institutions.

All of you present this morning can be of great assistance to those of us who are trying to bring about the greater study and inclusion of American music into the study of music in higher education. First, if you do not presently have an American music component in your American studies program, seek out and encourage some of your music colleagues to consider so doing. You may be surprised to find a faculty colleague eager to contribute to the American studies program if asked, especially if they can not offer such a course in the music department. Do not confine your search to just the resident musicologists, search out the music education faculty or faculty from the areas of theory/composition. Also faculty from the applied music areas often have strong interests in various aspects of American music.

Finally do not overlook your own abilities in acquiring knowledge about American music for your own use in both scholarly endeavors and in teaching. I have included some of the basic books, journals and recordings in the handout for your perusal. Many of you have, in your own elementary and secondary educational backgrounds played in bands, orchestras, and sung in choirs. Even if you have not had such experiences do not be put off by the seemingly mysterious aura of musical notation and theory . The level of mystery has unfortunately been added to those of us in the discipline of music, in spite of our claims of wanting to make music accessible to all! Becoming a musical amateur can be richly rewarding and it can aid in gaining a broader perspective in American studies. After all, as Ernest Boyer and Arthur Levine point out in *A Quest For Common Learning* , "Breakthroughs are occurring precisely at the points where, traditionally, the disciplines have been separated."[8]

With all of the current battles raging in higher education over the concept of the canon and what it should include, we might do well to note the words of James A. Banks, who recently wrote, "Only when the canon is transformed to reflect cultural diversity will students in our schools and colleges be able to attain the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to participate effectively in the global society of the next century."[9]

1.Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays* . New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1979. (See chapters four and nine.)

2. Peter Eliot Stone, *John Knowles Paine Mass in D* (liner notes) New York: New World Records, 1978.

3. Richard Crawford, *American Studies and American Musicology* . I.S.A.M. Monographs: Number 4. New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, Department of Music, School of Performing Arts, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. 1975. p. 3.

4. Crawford, p. 3.

5. Robert Copland, "Music Historiography in the Classroom". *The College Music Symposium* (Vol. 19, No. 1), Spring 1979, p. 147-148.

6. Elaine Brody, *Music in General Studies* Boulder, Colorado: College Music Society, p. 10.

7. Donald Grout and Claude Palisca, *A History of Western Music* , 4th edition, New York: W.W. Norton, 1988. p. ix.

8. Ernest Boyer and Arthur Levine, *A Quest For Common Learning* . p. 41.

9. James A. Banks, "The Battle Over the Canon: Cultural Diversity and Curriculum Reform" *Allyn & Bacon Educators' Forum* (Volume I Number 1 fall 1989), p. 13. "

Selected Bibliography

BOOKS

Chase, Gilbert. *America's Music* Revised Third Edition, Urbana and Chicago: University University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Hamm, Charles *Music in the New World* . New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1983.

Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Music in the United States* . Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1988.

Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans* . Second Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 1983.

JOURNALS

American Music , John Graziano editor, Published by the Sonneck Society and the University of Illinois Press.

Black Music Research Journal , Samuel Floyd editor, Published by the Center for Black Music Research. Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois.

The Black Perspective in Music , Eileen Southern editor, Published by the Foundation for Research in the Afro-American Creative Arts, Cambria Heights, New York.

REFERENCE WORKS

The New Grove Dictionary of American Music , ed. H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie London: Macmillan Press Limited and New York: Grove's Dictionaries of Music, Inc., 1986.

RECORDED ANTHOLOGIES OF MUSIC

Music in America . Coordinated by Karl Krueger. New York: The Society for the Preservation of the American Musical Heritage, 1958-72. (Now out of print. The Library of Congress is reissuing selected items.)